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23 June 1960

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

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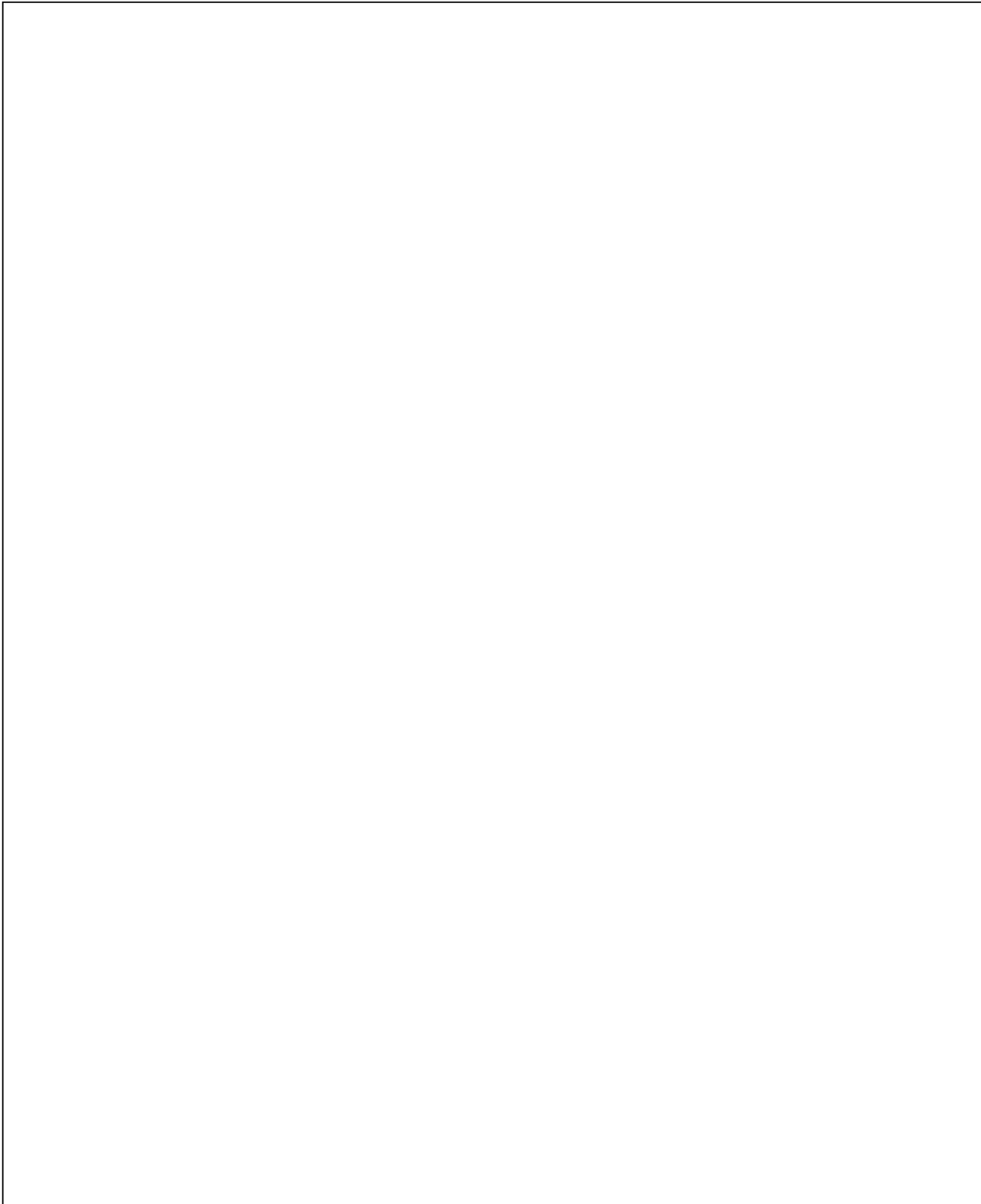
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THE WEEK IN BRIEF



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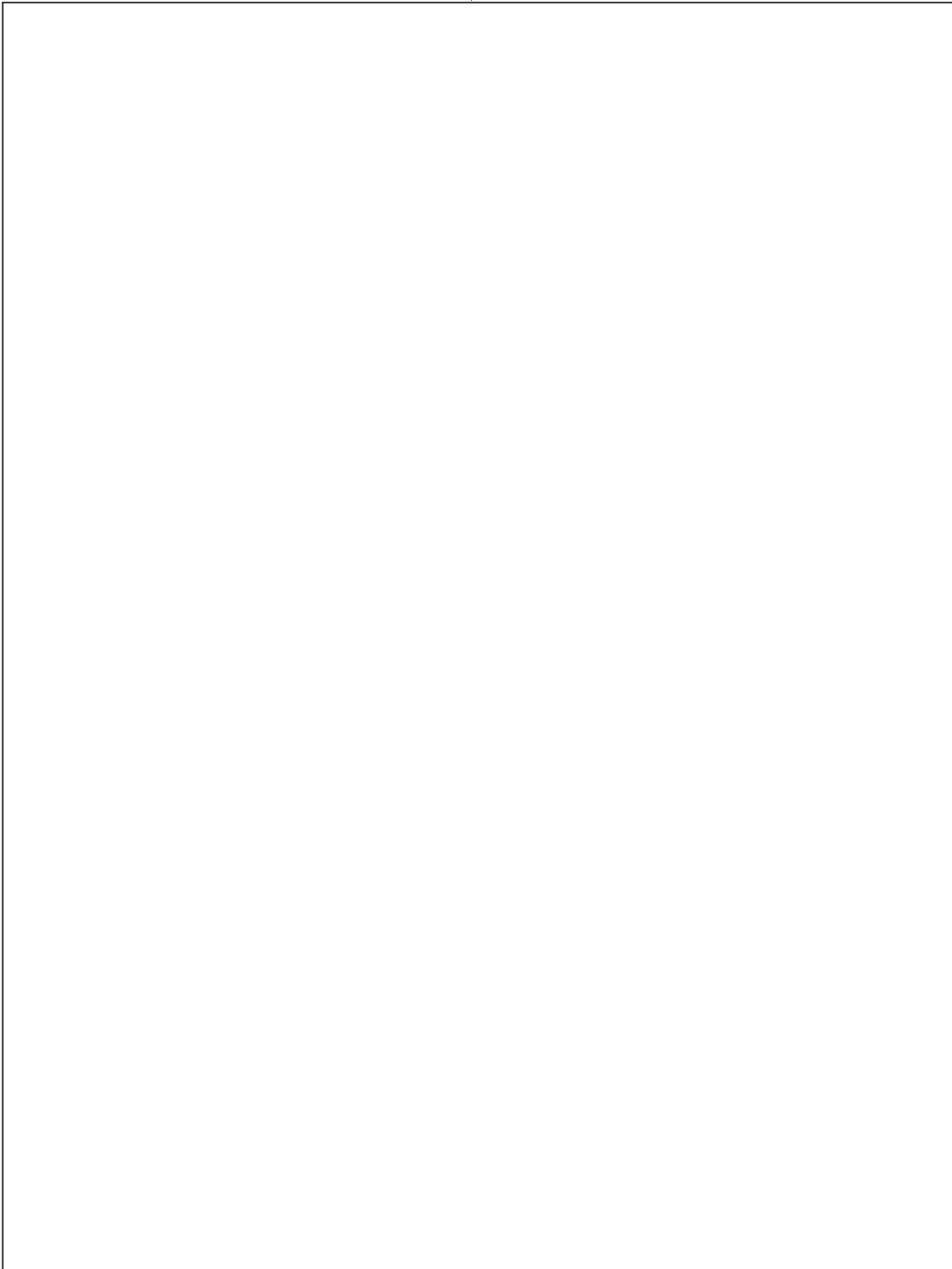
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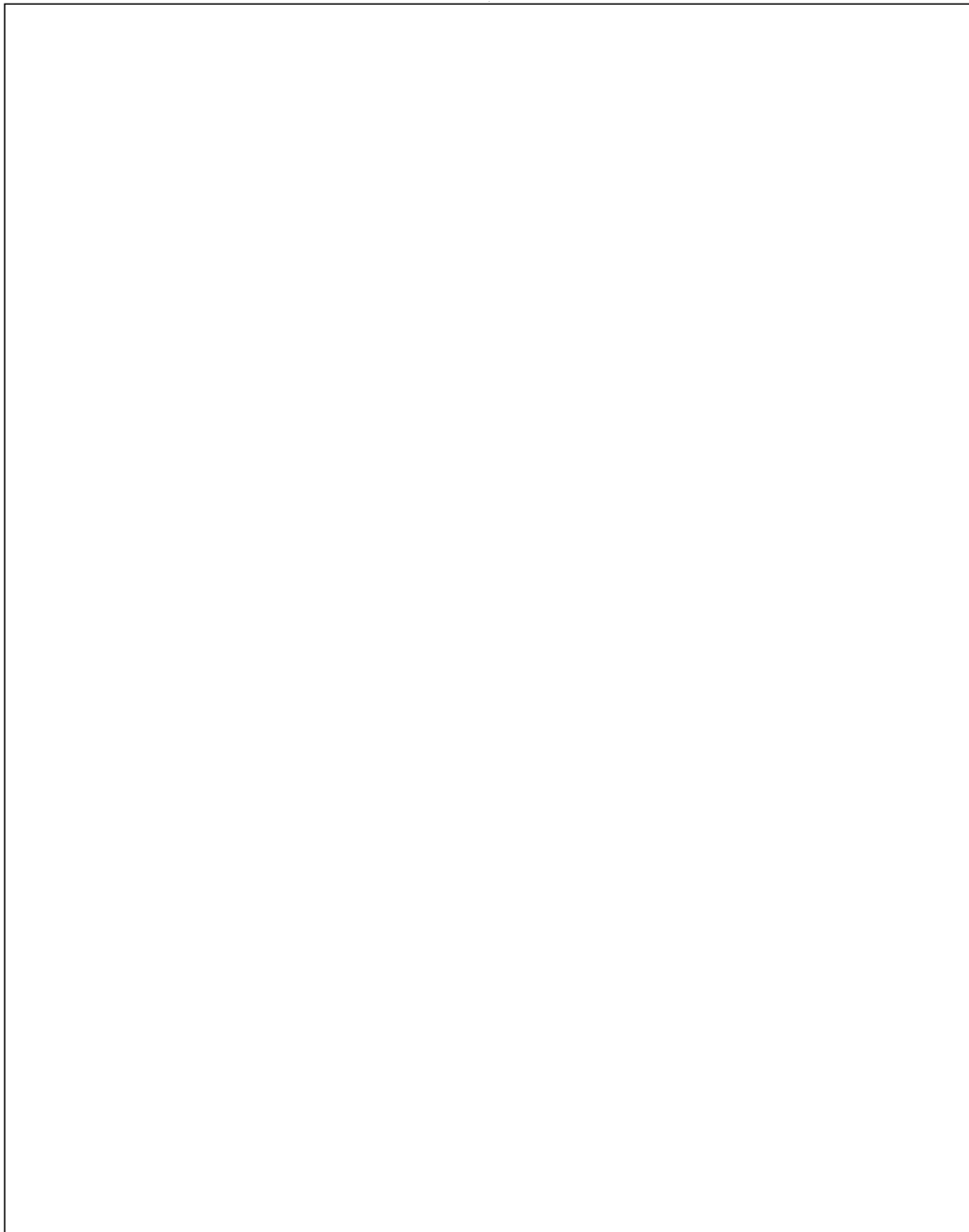
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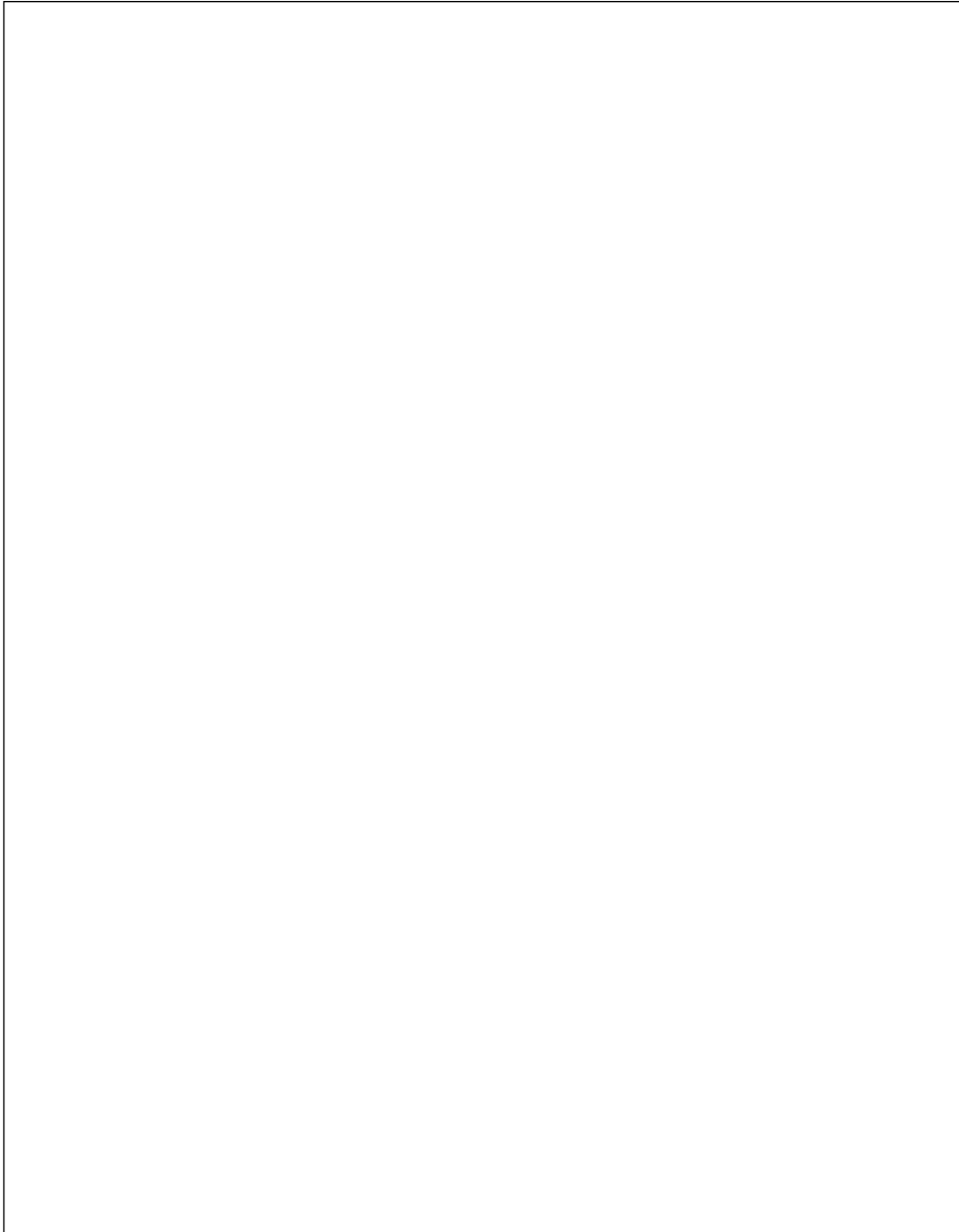
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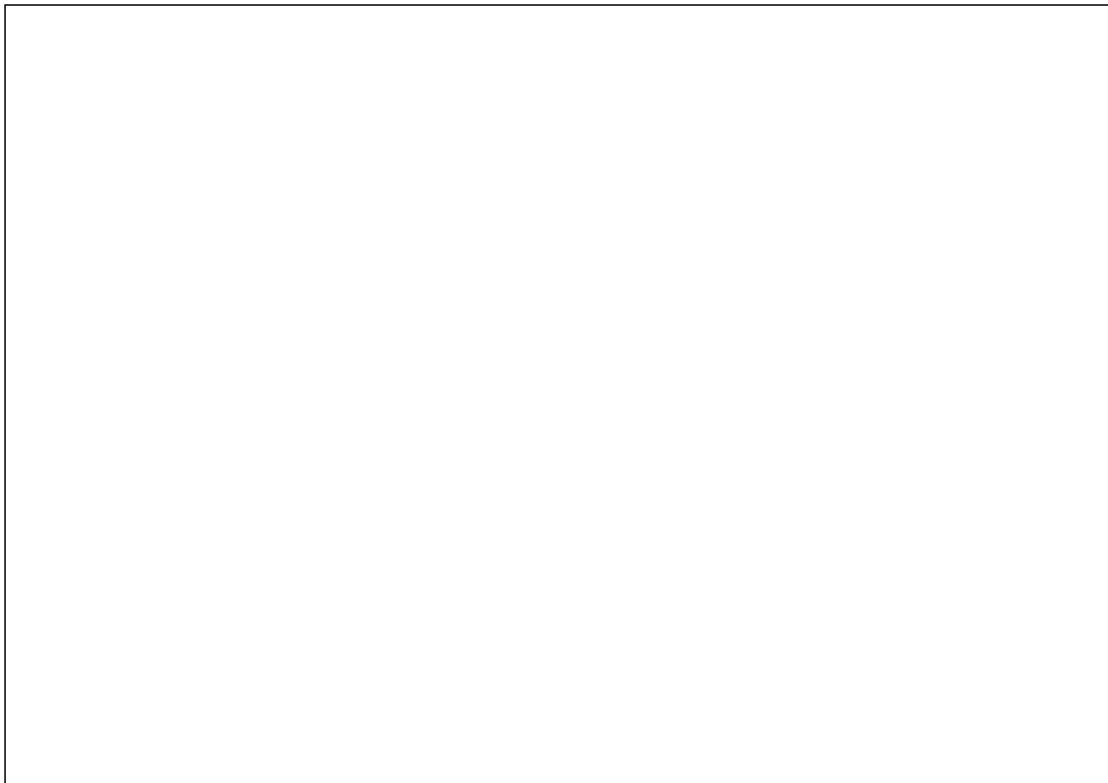
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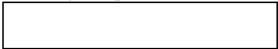
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THE EROSION OF ITALIAN DEMOCRACY Page 7

Italy's recent cabinet crisis, the most severe in the republic's history, has revived memories of the near-anarchy which preceded the abandonment of parliamentary democracy in the 1920s. The decreasing viability of a center coalition has intensified pressure on the Christian Democrats to make a clear-cut choice of allies from the right or left, and there has been talk of rightist efforts to seize power by force. Ambitious Premier Tambroni, whose caretaker mandate runs out in October, might be tempted to take extralegal measures in an effort to block replacement of his government by one relying on the Nenni Socialists' parliamentary support.



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EROSION OF ITALIAN DEMOCRACY

The recent cabinet crisis in Italy, the most severe in the republic's history, has revived memories of the near-anarchy which preceded the abandonment of parliamentary democracy in the 1920s. The decreasing viability of a center coalition has intensified pressure on the ruling Christian Democrats

to make a clear-cut choice of allies from the right or left, and there has been talk of rightist efforts to seize power by force. Ambitious Premier Tambroni, whose caretaker mandate runs out on 31 October, might be tempted to take extralegal measures to block replacement of his government by one relying

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on the Nenni Socialists' parliamentary support.

Shaky Democratic Base

A century of national unity has not sufficed to implant the democratic process in Italy, and the 14-year-old Italian Republic has never had the choice of another democratic alternative to the party in power. In the years when they were nationally allied, the Communists and the Nenni Socialists in effect reduced the size of the Chamber of Deputies as a democratic body by over a third, without counting the further reduction effected by the parties of the far right, the neo-Fascists and the Monarchists. Even today, when the Nenni Socialists and Monarchists have acquired at least quasi-respectability, the Communists and the neo-Fascists hold over a quarter of the parliamentary seats.

The Christian Democrats had a parliamentary majority from 1948 to 1953, but have since been dependent on the small center parties for support in governing. A center coalition has become progressively more difficult to maintain because of growing ideological dissension among the various center groups, and Italy's gov-

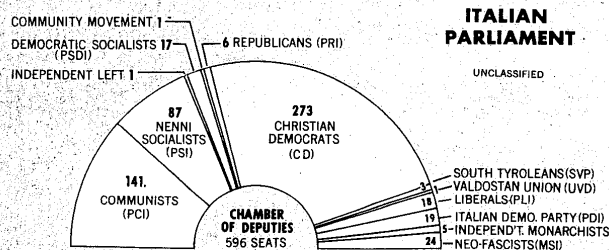
ent government's initial promise to confine itself to caretaker functions and resign after six months.

In the search for a broader parliamentary base, the faction-



TAMBRONI

ridden Christian Democratic party has been unable to decide between left and right. Tambroni's reliance on neo-Fascist parliamentary support for a slim working majority is opposed by left-wing Christian Democrats, who accepted it only as a summer solution. Similarly, the party's powerful rightist minority has been able to block formation of a government dependent on Nenni Socialist abstentions.



ernments have become increasingly vulnerable to the accusation of "immobilismo." The political stalemate is appropriately symbolized by the pres-

In the Italy of recent months, therefore, anarchy and authoritarianism have again become serious threats, and the editor of a pro-Christian Democratic daily in Naples warned on 10 April that unless the Italian people rouse themselves from their contempt for representative institutions, there is danger that

the country may "in the not-too-distant future" find itself in the grasp of another totalitarian regime.

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Nonconstitutional Practices

One specific danger to Italian democracy in this situation is that, as the cohesion and parliamentary strength of the amorphous center has declined, party leaders have tended to seek solutions outside parliament. This problem was stressed by Senate President Cesare Merzagora in February, when Premier Segni resigned rather than rely solely on Monarchist and neo-Fascist votes. Merzagora argued that it was improper for the government to quit while it had a parliamentary majority.



GRONCHI



MERZAGORA

Merzagora stressed that only two postwar cabinets had been brought down by nonconfidence votes in parliament, and he denounced the "persistent and unhealthy" practice of indulging in extraparliamentary crises in which cabinets were brought down as the result of pressures within the Christian Democratic party. Merzagora included in his attack on Italy's multiparty system the charge that the Constitutional Court and President Gronchi, as chief of state, were encroaching on the legislative branch.

Merzagora's speech was widely commented on in the Italian press. Of the two major independent papers, one considered it ill-advised, the

other felt it had "pinpointed the malaise afflicting Italian life." The neo-Fascist press seized on it as indicating the crisis within the regime, and to push for an authoritarian system. One center-left paper saw Merzagora as the spokesman for "conservative and economic" interests wishing to exploit the situation to establish a regime like that in Portugal.

Despite Merzagora's impassioned indictment, the Christian Democratic party has continued to ignore the spirit of the constitution in carrying out its decisions.

Premier Tambroni won a vote of confidence in the lower house on 8 April, but his party disregarded the chamber's approval and prevailed on a reluctant Tambroni to withdraw rather than depend on the neo-Fascists. The Christian Democratic directorate then called on Amintore Fanfani to form a center-left government, but the party's parliamentary group defied this order and forced Fanfani to retire.

Tambroni was restored to office by the Senate's vote of confidence on 29 April, but no effort was made to comply with the constitutional provision that a premier must be confirmed within ten days of investiture.

Coup Atmosphere

Tambroni's has been called a "paratroop government," perhaps in part because the current situation presents several elements propitious for a quick and violent seizure of power. The ruling party cannot decide on its own orientation; although the electorate has been moving to the left, the government has accepted neo-Fascist support,

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and concern among political and economic right-wingers and some members of the clergy over the possibility of an "opening" to the Nenni Socialists might be sufficient to encourage a military move to prevent it.



PACCIARDI

Former Defense Minister Pacciardi has stated that "a government opening to the left will never be created in Italy." As far back as 1958 Pacciardi had begun to threaten privately to enlist military aid--including paratroops in kidnapping President Gronchi, who favors such an "opening." Vincenzo de Stefano, the present chief of the special security forces detailed to the presidential palace, is also reported to have said he considers it the "patriotic duty" of whoever is in a position to do so to remove Gronchi from the political scene "by assassination if necessary."

Riots with anti-democratic overtones occurred at Pisa and Leghorn during March; these involved civilians--some Communists--and officer-led paratroops singing fascist songs. Disturbances were fomented by neo-Fascists and Monarchists in Rome during the 2 June celebration of the republic's 14th anniversary.

The Communists have reportedly ordered resumption of clandestine activities, and three arms caches have been discovered in the Bologna area. A police official has called the present climate the worst he has seen since 1948 when an attempted assassination of Communist leader Togliatti led to nationwide Communist disturbances.

For want of a strong leader, the most likely development if the Christian Democrats fail to work out a viable democratic government would seem to be some form of extralegal political adventure by Tambroni when his mandate expires. Tambroni's personality would lend itself to such an effort. He has been described as "an unscrupulous opportunist of the classic 18th century type, without the brains of 18th century adventurers but perfectly willing to make agreements with left and right."

In early April, before Tambroni complied with his party's order to resign, rumors were rife that he had met with police leaders and his defense minister--right-wing Christian Democrat Andreotti--to make plans to ensure his continuation in office. There was talk of a neo-Fascist show of strength in his support, and the Communist-dominated General Labor Confederation was rumored alerted for a protest strike.

"Little men, who could not see any further than their noses, blocked a center-left government; and this is just the way to bring on a Spanish civil war."

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*Democratic Socialist leader
Giuseppe Saragat, 30 March 1960.*

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Prospects

Some of this concern seems to be shared by President Gronchi, whose attitude toward Tambroni has been ambivalent. Gronchi is reported to have said that Tambroni, when he was premier-designate in April, appeared to believe he had a mission

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and the backing of popular opinion, whatever parliament or the parties might have thought. Now that he has a temporary lease on power, he may try to prolong it on one pretext or another.

Although local elections have been called for this fall, he is probably capable of interpreting the results to suit his own plans at that time. He might seek to postpone national elections indefinitely--a prospect with some appeal to the Christian Democrats, who expect losses for themselves and gains for the leftist parties in national voting. Strikes or uprisings against such an assumption of power would give Tambroni an excuse to enlist the aid of the military.

If left-wing Christian Democrats make another attempt this fall to form a center-left government based on Socialist

abstentions, Tambroni will be tempted to accept the support of the Group for Defense of the Republic, which was recently formed to prevent such an "opening." This group, organized on 26 May, includes former fascist activist Pino Romualdi, right-wing Christian Democrat and former Premier Giuseppe Pella, Civic Committees chief Luigi Gedda, Catholic Action president Agostino Maltarella, Pacciardi, and Guglielmo Gianini, former leader of the now defunct Common Man party, post-war haven for ex-Fascists.

Gedda, who seems to be the leader, has announced: "Today we are united in thought, tomorrow in action." Tambroni's espousal of such an extreme rightist national front could drive Socialists, Social Democrats, Republicans, and left-wing Christian Democrats into a popular front with the Communists.

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